

Christian Brothers Conference
Lasallian Monograph Series 2

THE FORMATION OF NEW TEACHERS

A Companion on the Lasallian Journey

By Brother Frederick C. Mueller, FSC, Ed.D.



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THE NAME "BROTHERS" WAS THE ONE THAT FITTED THEM BEST... [IT] IS THE CORRECT ONE BECAUSE IT INCLUDES THE DEFINITION OF THEIR STATE AND INDICATES THE MISSION PROPER TO THEIR VOCATION... THIS NAME TEACHES THEM THE EXCELLENCE OF THE DUTY THEY HAVE ASSUMED, THE DIGNITY OF THEIR STATE, AND THE HOLINESS PROPER TO THEIR PROFESSION. IT TELLS THEM THAT AS BROTHERS THEY OWE EACH OTHER MUTUAL PROOFS OF TENDER BUT SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP AND THAT CONSIDERING THEMSELVES THE ELDER BROTHERS OF THE CHILDREN WHO COME TO BE TAUGHT BY THEM, THEY SHOULD EXERCISE THIS MINISTRY OF CHARITY WITH TRULY LOVING HEARTS.—*THE LIFE OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE (BOOK 2)*, BLAIN, 2000, P. 186.

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2008

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The Formation of New Teachers: A Companion on the Lasallian Journey

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FOREWORD

When a new and expanded translation of John Baptist de La Salle's *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* became available to English readers in 1996, it contained a number of significant additions that the 1935 McGraw-Hill translation by F. de La Fontainerie had overlooked. Important material on the "Duties of the Inspector of Schools," the third part of *The Conduct*, was made available; and the document on "The Training of New Teachers," which is sometimes called "The Formator of New Teachers," was rediscovered. Looking back across the dozen years since the re-publication of *The Conduct*, I now marvel at the prescience of the inclusion of the document on new teachers, which had almost been relegated to the trash bin of history.

A careful reading of these seminal documents about the inspector of schools and the training of new teachers reveal a Lasallian pedagogical inspiration that was not only, or even primarily, about supervision and evaluation but one that was essentially about the importance of preparation and ongoing accompaniment. It seems to me that this is the fundamental insight captured by Brother Frederick Mueller and that it is one of enormous importance at this moment of great transition in the evolving partnership on behalf of the Lasallian educational and evangelizing mission.

Who even imagined in 1996 that the Brothers of the Christian Schools would have convoked the historic 2006 International Assembly: Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission, where Lasallians from every corner of the globe and every manifestation of the Lasallian charism gathered to develop a vision of our emerging Association and to fashion plans of action that would assure the vitality and integrity of Lasallian mission into the future or that the highest priority articulated by the delegates of the Assembly would have been that of initial and ongoing formation and accompaniment for mission and association?

De La Salle's preoccupation that the schools would run well, which is so clearly articulated in his *Letters* to the Brother teachers, required that he assure the spiritual, human, pedagogical preparation and accompaniment of the teachers; and he understood that this work of education and formation needed to begin at the initiation of one's vocational journey as a Lasallian educator. De La Salle was keenly aware, as we find reflected more than once in his *Meditations*, that "persistent bad habits" toward the beginning of the journey "are very difficult to stop" and that good habits cultivated in one's younger years "form the deepest roots in the hearts of those in whom they have been formed." He experienced firsthand "the imperceptible way" in which life's journey and the hand of God took hold of him in his youth and young adult years and continued to fashion "over a long period of time" the providential project which still continues and in which we are involved today.

It is now our time to lay a new foundation for the future of the Lasallian educational and evangelizing mission around the world, and both the International Assembly in 2006 and the 44th General Chapter in 2007 realized that one of the corner stones of this new edifice will be formation in association on behalf of a vibrant and vital Lasallian educational and evangelizing mission.

The remarks that Brother Michael McKenery delivered at the first Conference of Chief Administrators of Lasallian Secondary Schools in North America resonated with me when I read them; and here I paraphrase: "Association for mission has probably been easier for us these past number of years than it will be in the future...since ours has been an experience with many Brothers and former Brothers...former Sisters...former priests and seminarians...teachers who grew up with the Brothers in the Catholic Church of the 1950s and 1960s...as compared with the experience of young teachers who work with us today...who bring a totally different background...and who have lived an entirely different experience."

We live in a time of unprecedented fascination with and commitment on the part of diverse populations to the Lasallian vision and mission. It has been my experience in traveling around the Lasallian world, particularly during the first International Symposium of Young Lasallians

in Quebec, 2002, and the second International Symposium of Young Lasallians in Rome, 2006, that those in the Lasallian network who are under 35 years of age (some of whom are laity and others are De La Salle Brothers and Lasallian Sisters...some of whom are young teachers, volunteers, counselors, and administrators in Lasallian schools and child welfare agencies and others are former students with a keen interest in remaining connected) are ready to be engaged at the deepest level to assure the future vitality of our mission; and this new generation of Lasallians is asking to be taken seriously and to have opportunities for education, formation, and accompaniment that are specific to their stage of the Lasallian journey. They believe in the benefit, both to themselves and to the entire network, of offering different formation programs focused toward those Lasallians under 35 years of age because, as the International Council of Young Lasallians has stated, “we have a new point of view to offer and can help to renew the Institute because we are both active agents and recipients of the mission.”

Few people are as well prepared as Brother Frederick Mueller is to help us to begin today to grow the leaders of tomorrow. The serious and broad-based scholarship evidenced in *The Perceived and Preferred Goals of Principals, De La Salle Christian Brothers, and Lay Teachers in Lasallian Schools*, which was his 1994 doctoral dissertation at Boston College, and his vast and practical experience as a Lasallian administrator and formator on local, regional, and national levels are reflected in this small and timely book.

Consequently, I welcome his insights here presented on the importance of renewed opportunities for the training of new Lasallian teachers; and I admire the steadfastness with which he strives to help our younger Lasallians access the great riches of our Lasallian patrimony and find their own invaluable voice(s) as we all move forward in hope together. Perhaps there is no more important step for the Lasallian Family to take at this moment in our history than to rediscover the absolute necessity of providing an excellent formation and accompaniment for all of our new Lasallian teachers.

Brother William Mann, FSC

7 February 2008

INTRODUCTION

The concept and ideal of “brother” is one of the essential components of the Lasallian identity. It is not surprising, therefore, that this concept surfaces again and again in examining the role of the formator of new teachers and the various values that new teachers need to make their own as they grow into their ministry. For De La Salle and the early Brothers the “new teachers” might have been young Brothers or they might have been young teachers in the training college for prospective teachers in the country schools. Over the years the focus became young Brothers. Today, the focus becomes once again young Lasallian teachers, lay or Brother, learning to become teachers characterized by “the spirit of faith which unifies sacred and secular, the spirit of zeal which shows itself in relations with students and parents, and the spirit of community which binds the teachers to each other and causes them to think of their classes as intimate communities in which responsibility is shared with the students” and to become “competent teachers who could induce their pupils to follow their good example” (Poutet, 1997, p. 87). Today, as well, the focus is on “brother” and “sister” because of the reality of the Lasallian world and because what is key to the concept is the nature of the relationship implied in both of those words.

This reflective essay will examine ways in which some of the early practices in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and later amplifications of those practices can be applied to the Lasallian world of education today in the area of forming, mentoring, and accompanying new Lasallian teachers. It will focus on two areas:

1. the personal duties and essential qualities of the formator; and,
2. the tasks of the formator and ways to help the new teacher.

The term “formator” will be used to describe the person who works with new Lasallian teachers in their development as teachers. This is the name used in the “Preface of 1720” of *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* (Poutet, 1997, p. 98). Subsequent and alternative references

to supervisor, inspector, director, forming-master, etc. might name the person who performed that role; however, for the purposes of this essay, dependent as it is on the “Conduite des Formateurs des Jeunes Maîtres” or the “Conduct for Formators of New Teachers” (found in the 1811 edition of *Conduite des Ecoles Chrétiennes*), formator best describes the role and function of the person who assists the new Lasallian teachers.

The “Conduct for Formators” presents five reasons for the need for the training of new teachers:

1. to make the new teachers appreciate their work by making it as pleasant and painless as possible;
2. to make the students love school and to persuade their parents to send them readily;
3. to make sure that the students are taught well;
4. to save the new teachers from many problems they might meet as they begin teaching and to save the students from being punished because of those problems; and,
5. to preserve the good name of the school and of the Institute, as well as maintain the vision of a well managed or conducted school.

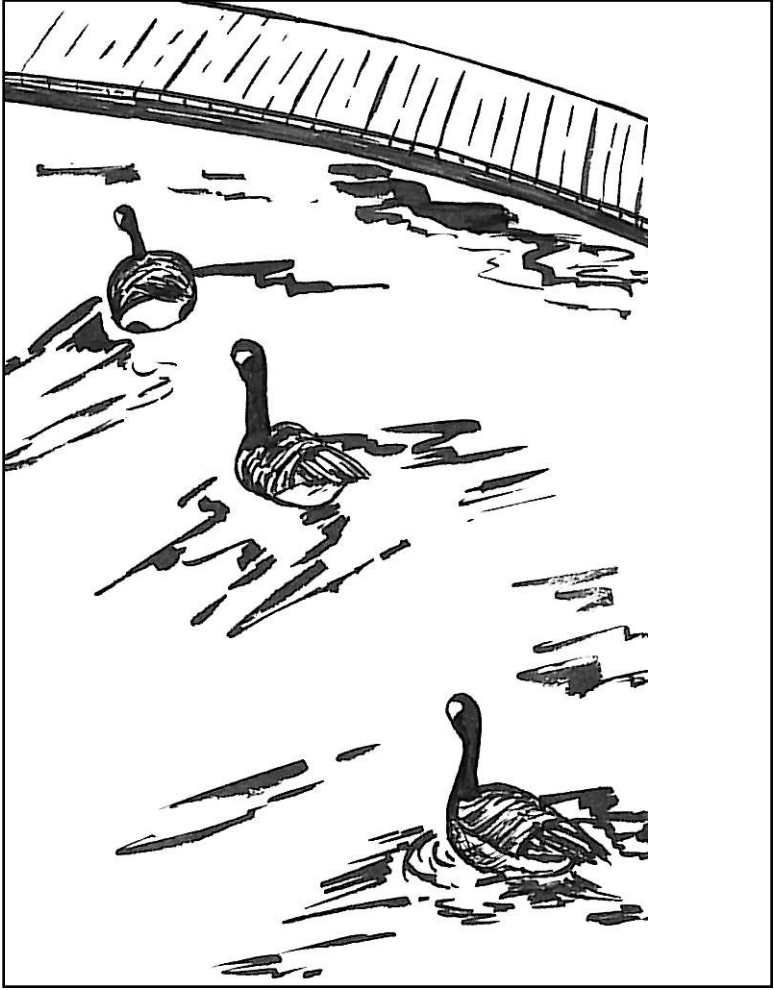
Behind these practical needs, however, stands another reason for the formation of new teachers. Formation is a process by which older, more experienced “brothers” assist younger, less experienced “brothers” to grow and to develop. Formation sees beyond the person being “formed” to the reason for formation, i.e. that the mission of providing a human and Christian education be carried out as well as possible. In the *First Meditation for the Time of Retreat*, John Baptist de La Salle reminds the earliest Brothers that they are part of God’s salvific plan for young people. He writes:

Since, then, God in his mercy has given you such a ministry, do not falsify his word but gain glory before him by unveiling his truth to those who you are charged to instruct. Let this be your whole effort in the instructions you give them, looking upon yourselves as the ministers of God and the dispensers of his mysteries... You, then, whom God has called to this ministry, work according to the grace

that has been given to you to instruct by teaching and to exhort by encouraging those who are entrusted to your care, guiding them with attention and vigilance...God wills not only that all come to the knowledge of truth, but also that all be saved. He cannot truly desire this without providing the means for it and, therefore, without giving children the teachers who will assist them in fulfillment of his plan....This is why you must honor your ministry and keep trying to save some of these children...Be faithful to this practice, then, in order to contribute as far as you are able and as God requires of you to the salvation of those whom he has entrusted to you.—*Meditation 193*

Therefore, such an exalted task and ministry and such an enormous responsibility would demand that the task be done well. It would further demand that the responsibility be assumed with the best means at one's disposal, i.e., to contribute as far as one is able and as is required by God. This is no small charge! And, in turn, this is a task that the formator cannot take lightly in preparing the young teacher to begin such a ministry and to assume such a responsibility.

The following sections are drawn from three sources: "Appendix C—The Training of New Teachers," as found in *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* (1996); "Conduite des Formateurs des Jeunes Maîtres," as found in *Conduite des Ecoles Chrétiennes* (1811); and, "Duties of the Forming-Master," as found in the *Management of Christian Schools by the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (1887).



PART I

The Personal Duties and Essential Qualities of the Formator

The principal concern of the formator must be to acquire the qualities and virtues demanded by the position. The position is highly dependent on the relationships developed between the formator and the new teachers. It is dependent as well on knowledge and experience that can be transferred and shared with the new teachers.

PEDAGOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

THE EARLY FORMATOR was to know the *Conduct* thoroughly since that was the chief source of methodology. In order to be helpful to the new teachers the formator had to be well acquainted with this text and series of processes (everything from handwriting instruction to correction to dealing with families and parents). Thus, contradictory advice would not be given the new teachers that would create confusion. Likewise, the students would have the optimal opportunity for success (as this methodology had shown). In addition, the formator was to study the textbooks to be used by the new teachers so that he would be helpful in assisting the new teachers in their class preparation and instructional practices.

TODAY THE FORMATOR must also know thoroughly proven educational methods and instructional strategies, ranging from classroom management to the integration of technology in instruction. She must be acquainted with the resources available to the new teacher—textbooks, library resources, audio-visual materials, etc. However, the formator today must also be able to help the new teachers select methodologies and resources that are appropriate, of proven quality, and consistent with the overall curriculum. To leave new teachers on their own, trying to pick and choose with little experience on which to base those

choices, can be a source of great confusion to the new teachers and can leave students as “laboratory rats” on whom still another educational theory is tested. In addition, the formator must help the new teacher to understand the impact of environment, family, and peers on the educational process and the impact of schools on family and peer relationships (cf. resources like Mann’s *The Lasallian School: Where Teachers Assist Parents in the Education and Formation of Children*, pp. 49-92, and Taffel’s *The Second Family*, pp. 189-201).

FAITH

THE EARLY FORMATOR was to be imbued with faith in order to see in the new teachers, despite their defects, the person of Jesus. He was to see in “the least of my brothers” the face of Jesus and was to esteem them. Thus, it was not only the new teachers who were to grow in the spirit of faith. Seeing with the eyes of faith would allow the formator to view the new teachers not only from their external professional decorum but also from within—to see the truly generous hearts that devoted themselves to God’s work. The expectation was that “apart from a very small number of people who are not well disposed...so that they could not be entrusted with the first steps in education for children...we can say everyone else could do this if they wanted to and if someone took the trouble to train them” (Poutet, 1997, pp. 98-99, quoting from the “Conduite des Formateurs”). The early formator also understood that his work was important not just for the new teachers, but also for the students. In a sense, the formator of new teachers would share in the ministry of the new teachers as they touched the hearts of the young people entrusted to their care. In faith, the formator was able to see that his work touched not only the hearts of the new teachers but also, by extension, the minds and hearts of the young people entrusted to their care.

FOR THE FORMATOR TODAY faith remains an essential virtue. New teachers choose the profession for a variety of reasons. The formator needs to discern over time if certain new teachers have the generous heart that is needed and are suitable for such a calling in the world of education as well as in the world of Lasallian ministry. It is with eyes of faith that the formator looks beyond missed timelines and appointments, mo-

ments of forgetfulness and laxity, to see the good person who really does want to help, teach, and love young people. The eyes of faith allow the formator to make judgments based not solely on his own biases and prejudices, likes and dislikes, and to see what is truly important. Likewise, he understands that his work too is a ministry that includes the students as well as the new teachers.

ZEAL

FLOWING FROM THE SPIRIT of faith of the early formator was a spirit of zeal that was demonstrated in the devotedness and generosity with which he offered his services to the new teachers. Nothing was to get in the way of his activity on behalf of and his attention toward the new teachers—neither personal activity nor other work requirements. He was to be wholly devoted to them. The question he was to ask himself was: what more can be done? The devotedness was to be animated by great charity. The formator was to excel in amiability and kindness and to offer a pleasing and engaging presence. He was to be neither curt nor dry and was to avoid a tone of command; rather, the tone was to be one of counseling or proposing what was best. The formator was called to love sincerely and with a great love the young teachers “entrusted to him.” That love was not to be driven by an affection attached to their good qualities (or even to their defects) but rather was to be motivated by a supernatural motive.

LIKEWISE, THE FORMATOR TODAY needs to be animated by a spirit of zeal. It is not by coincidence that the spirit of faith and the spirit of zeal is the spirit of the Institute; and, it is by this spirit (faith moving into deed—love) that Lasallian life and vitality is measured. One would expect therefore that the formator would be infused with this spirit. The overflow of faith in a burning passion for one’s ministry would allow the formator to both be effective with and a model for the new teacher. Regardless of her other responsibilities, the formator’s major preoccupation is with the new teachers—availability in times of both trial and success, putting aside other tasks to accompany new teachers when such accompaniment is needed, seeking out new and better ways to assist new teachers in their development. In addition, she realizes that in her dealings with these new teachers she is to be a person who

can listen, as well as offer advice. She is to be a person who proposes solutions, suggestions, and changes rather than dictates them. She is to be a person who creates a space for dialogue in which creative ideas can arise. She recognizes that these new teachers, though short on experience, may have insights that simply need to be explored, refined, adapted using her experience as a sounding board and a reality check. A quality the formator seeks to reinforce in the new teachers, that of a gratuitous care for all their students, is called forth from the formator as well. Her love and care for the new teachers ought not be motivated by how well they are doing, how talented or gifted or personally attractive they are, nor even by how needy they are or dependent on the formator; rather, she is to love them because each is good in and of him/herself. She is to reflect in her care for them God's gratuitous, free, unconditional love. She believes that God has entrusted to her these new teachers, even as God has entrusted the young people to these new teachers. This becomes a motivating and driving factor in all her dealings with these new teachers.

PATIENCE, PRUDENCE, WISDOM AND OTHER VIRTUES

OTHER VIRTUES THAT the formator needed to cultivate were patience, exactness, prudence, wisdom, vigilance, constancy, order, and impartiality. These virtues were not unlike some of the "twelve virtues of the good teacher" that were listed in some of the earliest editions of *The Conduct of the Christian School*, as noted by Everett (1996, pp. 26-32). These "twelve virtues" were expanded upon by Brother Agathon in 1785, a version of which was added to subsequent editions of *The Conduct*. Patience was to lead the formator not to be discouraged when some of the new teachers might be lacking in the ability to be a good speaker, or in intelligence, or in constancy and consistency, or in energy of character; rather, the formator was called upon to find ways to encourage by every means possible. In addition, the formator was to be exact and precise—to be on time and to be responsible, thus giving a good example to the new teachers. For this purpose, it was suggested that the formator keep a calendar of events. The formator was to excel in prudence in that he was to do nothing that would compromise the authority of the new teachers. He was to be able to foresee the consequences of actions taken both by himself and by the

new teachers. Wisdom was another virtue with which the formator was to act. He was to attach importance to that which was truly important and to not allow himself or the new teachers to get caught up in the trivial. Some areas of importance were the exaltedness of the vocation, the catechism lesson, and showing respect for authority. The formator was to be untiring in his vigilance, allowing nothing to escape his eyes; he was to be a man of great constancy, able to withstand the craving for novelty so natural to the young teacher; he was a man of order for whom everything had an appropriate time and place; and, he was to show impartiality in dealings with the new teachers and with students alike. Above all, he was called upon to strive to give example, in his own person and in his own ministry, to all that is asked of the new teacher. The formator was to excel in experience, tact, and virtue. The new teachers, in learning about the twelve virtues of the good teacher, would be able to see them operative in the formator and to experience their effectiveness in a personal way, having been formed in a wise, generous, gentle, and vigilant manner.

TODAY'S FORMATOR NEEDS to possess these same gifts, if only so that he can model them for the new teachers. However, these gifts or virtues are also of practical conse-

quence in the process of forming new teachers, mentoring them into the profession and accompanying them in their personal journey to understand their call to be teacher. Not every new teacher, if any, is a finished product; most, if not all, are teachers in the making who will make mistakes and hopefully learn from those mistakes. The formator needs to be patient with the human process of growth, of learning from errors (sometimes the same error being made over and over again), with the different ways in which different people develop. The formator needs to be patient with the new teacher who either cannot talk the language of the students (talks above them) or only can talk the language of the students (makes him/herself one of them). He needs to be patient as well with the new teacher who is highly intelligent but is

“YOU MUST SHOW MORE MILDNESS TOWARD SOME, MORE FIRMINess TOWARD OTHERS. THERE ARE THOSE WHO CALL FOR MUCH PATIENCE, THOSE WHO NEED TO BE STIMULATED AND SPURRED ON, SOME WHO NEED TO BE REPROVED AND PUNISHED TO CORRECT THEM OF THEIR FAULTS, OTHERS WHO MUST BE CONSTANTLY WATCHED OVER TO PREVENT THEM FROM BEING LOST OR GOING ASTRAY.”—MEDITATION 33.1

unable to convey even the simplest of concepts to students in an intelligible way or who struggles him/herself with complex concepts. That same degree of patience is needed with the new teacher who one day uses a movie in class and the next day brings the students on a field trip, neither activity brought to a conclusion and neither activity related to the other. Patience is also required for the new teacher who does not stand still in class or the one who rarely rises from the desk. For each the formator needs to find an encouraging word that will confirm the behavior and affirm the new teacher, or challenge the behavior and suggest a different approach.

So too the formator today needs to exercise great prudence and not allow his own judgments to rush him to action. New teachers need to establish their own authority, as difficult and time-consuming as that process might be. An over-eager formator can step in, rather over-step the bounds, and never allow the new teacher to win over the class. Of course, prudence also will dictate when the formator must exercise his own authority for the good of the students involved. Whatever the action taken, the formator has to foresee the consequences for the new teacher and for the students.

This calls for wisdom to discern what is really important. The formator must assist the new teachers to see that not everything they are involved in bears the same or equal weight—it is more important to be on time for class than it is to be on time for lunch (unless one is supervising), though it is important to have lunch; it is more important that one prepare one's reflection with the students for the day than to prepare the nice but nonessential graphics on a worksheet, though it is important to have attractive and well-prepared instructional materials. It is a matter of being able to see in varying shades of gray rather than simply in black and white.

The vigilant formator often notices problems before they become major. He also notices other traits, behaviors, etc., that might go unnoticed—the new teacher's eyes that see the entire classroom, the new teacher's simple but effective greeting of individual students. Because the formator is vigilant he can intervene in negative situations and can reinforce positive situations early, on the one hand avoiding a worse situation and on the other hand encouraging even more productive activity.

Constancy leads the formator to see and to act in such a way that highs and lows, successes and failures are evened out. The formator has no need to try new and different approaches to his task every day. Open to change, he is not captive to the theory of “change for the sake of change.” For the new teachers the formator is a rock to which they can cling when beaten about by the explosion of new experiences they meet and the proliferation of unconnected pieces of information they receive daily.

The formator sees order as a positive, for activities and events need to be prioritized. Chaos breeds chaos; the formator tries to bring some order out of the chaos, whether the chaos be a new teacher’s life gone awry or a classroom situation out of control. The wise, constant, and ordered formator recognizes that there is season and a time for everything. Calmly he tries to point this out to the new teachers on days of reaping and on days of rooting out, on days filled with laughter and on days at the brink of tears.

In all this, the formator at times deliberately and other times unconsciously models these qualities for the new teachers. So natural should these qualities be to the formator, so much should these be a part of the repertoire of his own personal and professional behaviors that to be patient and wise and vigilant is natural, a first impulse. These virtues, the result of life experiences reflected upon, need to be nurtured by the formator as well if they are to remain alive, rooted in faith and zeal, given away and not hoarded. To excel in experience and virtue is a grace of calling that the formator needs to respond to in his daily life as a Lasallian.



PART II

The Tasks of the Formator and Ways to Help the New Teachers

The formator is called upon to be an intelligible, charitable, and generous guide whose task it is to help the new teachers avoid any pitfalls that could lead them to become discouraged or to eventually leave teaching. The assistance of the formator is demanded not only by the new teachers but also by those who may have been teaching for some time but still are in need of direction.

Some of the things that the formator was encouraged to do to assist the new teachers were: give them the expectation that they will succeed if they follow the advice given them; help them to see that the formator does not seek to spy on them in observing them in class, but rather seeks to assist them; help the new teachers to adapt themselves to the various personalities of the students in order to relate with them in a positive way; give the less-gifted new teachers time to improve; show them how to improve and do not merely point out mistakes; avoid being either too demanding or too lax; spur on the new teachers who need it and keep the others steady; do not over-praise the proud ones in their success but make sure to praise the shy ones for even a small success (Poutet, 1997, p. 99).

Specifically, the formator was to assist the new teachers by:

1. promoting in them love for teaching;
2. encouraging them to know their subject matter; and,
3. observing them in class by which they could help them to avoid certain behaviors and qualities and to acquire other behaviors and qualities.

In performing these tasks the formator was reminded that no effort was to be spared in forming the “conduite” or development of the new teachers; in fact, if the formator should find that more effort is needed, then all the more precious would be the rewards for his pains in knowing that his efforts were successful (*Conduite*, 1811, p. 307).

PROMOTING LOVE FOR TEACHING

THE FORMATOR’S PRIME TASK was to help the new teachers ground themselves in a spirituality of teaching that would both motivate them to do their teaching well and would provide for them the means by which they could promote in their own students a spiritual life.

The new teachers were to be reminded that as teachers they resemble Jesus Christ himself. Using the text of Matthew 19:13ff as a starting point, the new teachers could see that Jesus was for them a model to be imitated in the way he loved children and that Jesus’ words to his apostles were

also directed toward them as teachers: to receive the children with love, tenderness and open arms (*Conduite*, 1811, p. 299).

“CONSIDER JESUS CHRIST AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD OF THE GOSPEL WHO SEEKS THE LOST SHEEP, PLACES IT UPON HIS SHOULDERS, AND CARRIES IT BACK TO THE FOLD. SINCE YOU ARE TAKING HIS PLACE, LOOK UPON YOURSELF AS OBLIGED TO DO THE SAME THING.”—
MEDITATION 196.1

In addition, the new teachers were to see themselves as having been entrusted with students by Jesus Christ himself. The teachers were responsible for leading the students to salvation. Jesus Christ had confided to the teachers the innocence

of children in order that the young people come to understand the mysteries of life and death through their teachers. This noble function of teaching was the same as that given to the apostles by Jesus Christ after the resurrection (*Conduite*, 1811, p. 300).

In calling forth some of the images of the *Meditations*, the formator was to remind the new teachers that they were like guardian angels, they were representatives of Jesus Christ who act and speak as if it were Jesus Christ himself, they were ministers of God, and they were dispensers of God’s mysteries. The new teachers were to look on the school as a “novitiate” or training place in the teaching of Jesus Christ where the

children could learn to be holy, could learn the practice of virtues, and could learn how to be good Christians and good citizens (*Conduite*, 1811, p. 301).

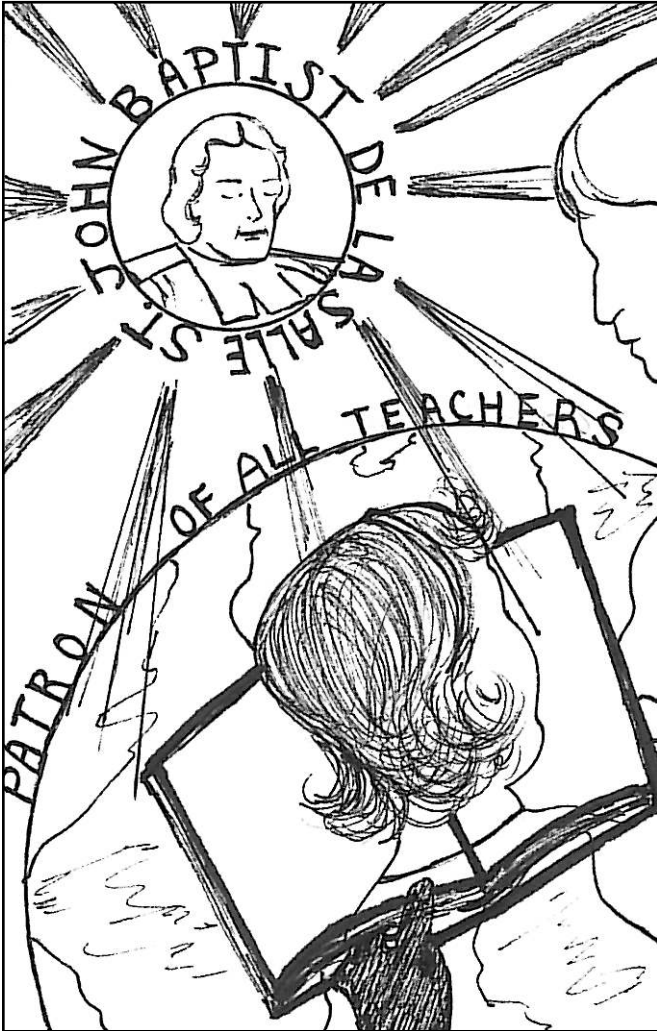
The new teachers were also to be reminded that parents and pastors were entrusting the children to them. Through their own good example, prayers, instruction, and watchful vigilance, the new teachers were responsible to promote the students' spiritual life (*Conduite*, 1811, p. 303). The new teachers were urged to speak to and exhort the students in such a way that they would be faithful to prayer and Mass and that they would come "to piety, fear of God, and horror of sin" (*Conduct*, 1996, p. 266). However, according to the 1828 edition of the *Rule for Formators* (Poutet, 1997, p. 102), "it is by suggestion, by exhortation, and especially by example that he [the new teacher] should teach his students to behave **as they [the teachers] do themselves**, in carrying out the precepts of the Gospel, [because] the practices of a piety which is regimented will only last as long as the fear which produces them."

Thus, it was stressed to the new teachers that it was by exhortation and example, always respecting the students' freedom and their consciences, that they were to discharge their duty.

Above all, it was the spirit of faith that animated them that would allow them to see, in the children they instructed, Jesus Christ who loves the children more than he loves his own life and who sheds his blood for them (*Conduite*, 1811, p. 303). The clear message that the formator was to give to the new teachers was that, if Jesus Christ so loves the children even to the point of dying for them, so should they love the children entrusted to them.

"RECOGNIZE JESUS BENEATH THE POOR RAGS OF THE CHILDREN WHOM YOU HAVE TO INSTRUCT."—MEDITATION 96.3

A PRIMARY TASK of the Lasallian formator today is to assist the new teachers to view their work as a calling or vocation (Palmer, 1998, p. 30; Botana, 2004, p. 9ff). Such a task needs to be undertaken in much the same way that the new teachers were instructed to promote the spiritual life of their own students, i.e. by suggestion, exhortation and example respecting the freedom and consciences of the new teachers.



This task for the formator might be best described as an accompaniment of the new teachers in their journey of deepening the sense of the “why” of what they do. Often this accompaniment unfolds in the sharing of personal stories (new teacher and formator alike). Sometimes it occurs in the gradual use of a language to describe the tasks of teaching that is from and of the heart and that speaks to the heart. Always it happens in a context of invitation and hospitality—inviting the new teachers to envision themselves as a minister of God, a guardian angel, a good shepherd in light of the very powerful and practical experiences of their early days of teaching.

Such accompaniment demands of the formator that she too be grounded in her own spiritual reality as a teacher. She needs to be able to listen to the sometimes raw and sometimes subtle expressions of the new teachers (expressions that might reveal frustration or exhilaration or searching for meaning). She must be willing to share from the deep well of her own experiences. Her task is to assist the new teachers “mine” the spiritual treasures of their motives and experiences. As well her task is to give the new teachers images or words in which to express those motives and experiences in order that they make sense to themselves and to others.

Accompaniment of new teachers is focused on the making of personal meaning in the task of teaching and can lead to a motivation, dedication and commitment that enables the new teachers to endure difficult times and to find fulfillment in both the good and the bad. The formator accompanies the new teachers as they grow to love teaching, with all the peaks and valleys involved in any love affair.

ENCOURAGING KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUBJECT MATTER

Promoting love for teaching would be insufficient if the new teachers were not adequately prepared professionally. One of the reasons for giving teaching a spiritual foundation was that the new teachers would be motivated to become excellent teachers to the extent that they were able and as was required of them.

THEREFORE, THE FORMATOR was to encourage the new teachers to study the subjects they were to teach thoroughly. This meant that the new

teachers were to prepare their lessons thoroughly. Preparation was to take precedence over any personal or special studies. The new teachers were encouraged to study and to prepare together.

In addition, the formator was to remind the new teachers that it was essential to know not only the subject matter but also how to impart it to the students with clearness and accuracy. With the study of religion especially, the new teachers were encouraged to reflect seriously, beyond the literal knowledge of the subject matter, in order to make it a part of their own lives by understanding the full meaning and impact of what was to be taught.

THE FORMATOR TODAY has a similar responsibility to ensure that the new teachers are knowledgeable in their academic fields, are well-prepared in their lesson-planning, and find ways to convey the subject matter with clearness and accuracy to the students. This is no small task. In this area the formator is asked to serve as a professional mentor.

New teachers may be dealing with multiple preparations, perhaps even in different subject areas. They may be responsible for supervisory duties during the school day and extracurricular activities after school hours. Some may be pursuing an advanced degree and some may be holding a second job to supplement salary or to pay off undergraduate expenses. For new teachers time is at a premium!

Even though new teachers may know the latest theories and concepts in their fields of study, there is no guarantee that they have the ability to convey that knowledge clearly and intelligibly to the students. It is said that one does not really “know” something until one can explain it to another. The formator or mentor must work with new teachers to develop an appropriate vocabulary, to connect the new knowledge to what has already been learned or to something already understood by the students so that they can create a scaffold of knowledge, and to find ways to make the new knowledge interesting, practical, and motivational in and of itself. Often this requires new teachers to relearn and restudy the material with new and different eyes, i.e., the eyes of their students. In some cases, the formator needs to mentor the new teachers to make the material their own through rewriting or reworking the material to a level that the students can understand. This requires seri-

ous reflection, going beyond the literal, until the material becomes one's own. When values are an obvious part of the material it is incumbent upon the new teachers to consider how those values fit into their own lives—a short story about a young gay person will raise issues of how the teacher views homosexuality; a lesson on African colonization will raise issues of how the teacher views the current and more subtle colonization brought about by globalization; a laboratory lesson on genetics will raise issues of how the teacher views cloning and other bioethical issues. Thus, knowledge of the subject matter is much more complicated than simply being able to present a new theory or a new concept.

The formator today, as professional mentor, might bring the new teachers together so that they reflect together on their instruction or might direct the new teacher toward a veteran teacher in order to see the subject matter from varying points of view. However it is to be done, the new teachers must enter the classroom prepared and comfortable in what they are going to teach. It helps, of course, if the new teachers really “love” their subject matter and have allowed it to become a part of their own lives. Palmer (1998, p. 11) claims that good teaching is the interplay of teacher, student, and subject matter. As much as the teacher must touch the hearts of the students and the students do in fact touch the hearts of their teachers, it is necessary in good teaching that the subject matter touches both the heart of the teacher and that of the student. The good teacher is able to create that webbed relationship that weaves teacher, students, and subject matter together. Knowledge of and love for one's subject matter is necessary!

OBSERVING NEW TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM

BEFORE THE NEW TEACHERS were to enter the classroom the formator was encouraged to have them observe teachers who were good. The new teachers could even serve as monitors and assistants in order to get a sense of life in a classroom. If there could not be a gradual introduction to teaching, the formator was urged to make sure that the new teachers understood the signs and practices of the school (e.g., the use of the signal—a small clicking instrument used to give standard directions) and, in fact, that they would practice them until they were done with ease and certainty. In addition, a written copy of the daily schedule

was to be given to the new teachers so to know the times for class and other activities during the day. The formator was to also bring the new teachers to the classroom before students were there to show the new teachers how to set up the classroom (seating plan, etc.) and to make known to the new teachers any special needs of particular students.

Once the new teachers started in the classroom, it was essential that the formator paid frequent visits to the classroom, not to embarrass the new teachers by his presence, but rather to serve as an on-going and regular way of providing encouragement and feedback. The formator was to do nothing during the visitations to undermine the authority of the new teachers in class (if advice needed to be given it was to be done in an unobtrusive way, perhaps through hand signals). The formator was to speak to the new teachers after class—pointing out shortcomings with mildness and charity, encouraging them to correct the shortcomings, and pointing out ways to do so. The formator was not to give too much advice at the same time, perhaps only two or three essential points, so that those points could be worked on, corrected, and put into practice before something else was to be addressed. It was most important that the formator concerned himself when the young teachers were having a problem of classroom “order,” in which case the formator was to help the new teachers establish order themselves. Only as a last resort was the formator to establish order himself since once the restraint was removed and the formator left, the classroom would deteriorate to the same disorder.

In visiting the classrooms the formator was to look for the following:

1. Do the new teachers observe the rules of silence, i.e., make use of the signal to give directions, refrain from excessive talk, model behavior rather than give lengthy explanations, etc.? How do they carry themselves in class? With gravity? Are they self-possessed and calm? Do they use the time well and keep each student occupied?
2. Do the new teachers teach with the method? Do they adapt to the capacity of the students? Are the lessons interesting? Are the questions clear, short and to the point? Are the answers given by the new teachers or accepted by them from the students good, exact and to the point? Are the lessons connected? Is each lesson a complete whole in itself?

3. How are rewards/praise and correction given? Are the promises or threats reasonable? Are the new teachers just and impartial in awards, i.e. the new teachers neither abuse awards nor are too prodigal with them? Do the new teachers impose too many punishments or punishments that are detrimental to good order or in fact create further disorder?

In short, do the new teachers possess the “Twelve Virtues of the Good Teacher”? This question is to be looked at more thoroughly in the section on the “Maxims or Axioms of Good Teaching” and “Those Qualities to be Corrected and Those to be Acquired by New Teachers.”

In order to work effectively with the new teachers in classroom observation the formator was required to know the new teachers and their characters. If the new teachers exhibited ill-regulated zeal, they were to be enlightened and guided to keep within bounds; if they were self-willed, they were to be helped to become docile to counsel. The formator was to know if they were presumptuous and “know it alls,” if they were concealing their difficulties fearing humiliation, or if they were inconstant, i.e., of good will but lacking follow through. The formator was to encourage the timid new teachers, shy of their students, to be more self-possessed, and the sad, melancholic, restless new teachers to open their minds and hearts to the humanizing influences around them. If the new teacher were really disorganized, the formator was to show kindness and charity. He was never to repel or reprimand or threaten with dismissal. He was to avoid putting the person in a competitive role with another (where defeat would be a last straw). In addition, he was to help him look at the bright side of things, and to praise often, making commendatory remarks when appropriate. If the students were hard to manage, the formator was to assist the new teachers to win those students over. In short, the formator was to do everything possible before giving up on the new teachers, even trying the new teachers in one or two less troublesome classes.

THE LASALLIAN FORMATOR TODAY, as professional mentor for the new teachers, would have similar tasks in observing the new teachers and assisting them in their professional growth. A period of observation of veteran and accomplished master teachers, a gradual introduction to the classroom as a monitor or assistant, and a time in the classroom under

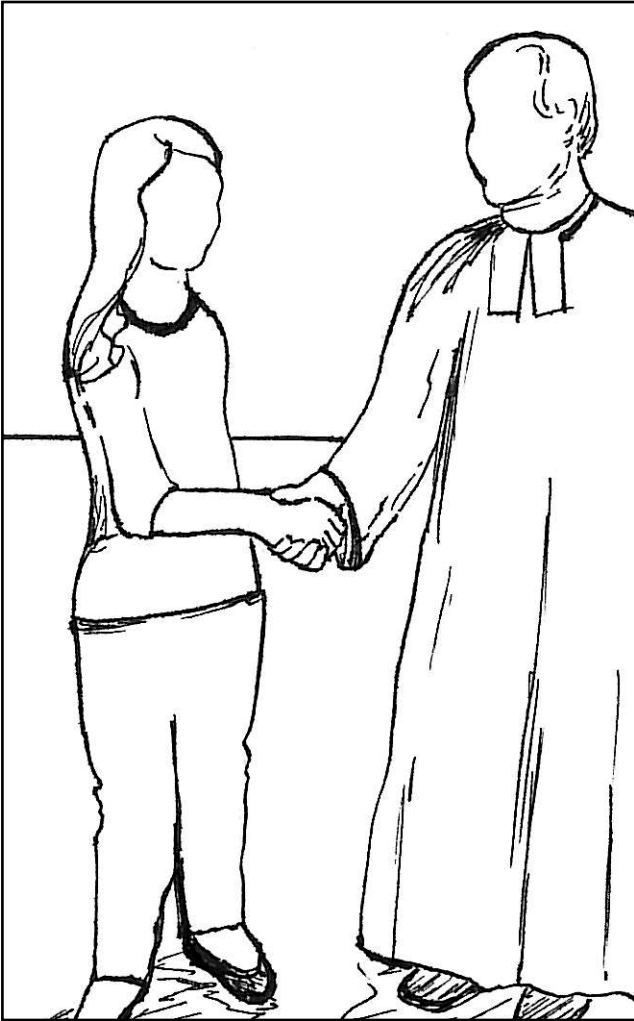
the guidance of a master teacher—these are luxuries not frequently provided by the school that has hired new teachers, though often part of the new teachers’ undergraduate or graduate training for certification as a teacher. However, frequently that “student teaching” experience has been in a different school with different kinds of students, often with a different syllabus and course of studies, with a different school climate, and with different rules and expectations (written and unwritten) of both students and teachers. A period of gradual assimilation into the culture of the school and into full-time teaching would be ideal! In the place of the ideal, the mentor must create situations through which the assimilation can happen. This might include: making sure that the new teachers understand the written policies of the school as well as the idiosyncratic expectations (the **real** dress code or homework policy); making them aware (and even doing a “dry run,” if needed) of the common practices in the school, e.g. the fire drill route; deciphering the daily semester and yearly schedules; going through forms and highlighting what is important in terms of due dates; bringing the new teachers to their classrooms and helping them to make them hospitable, accommodating, attractive, and both student-friendly and teacher-friendly; and, reviewing with them students with special needs, medical, educational, etc. All of this, and more, the mentor does so that she can make the new teachers feel more at ease and at home in strange surroundings. In addition, the mentor helps to facilitate making connections between the new teachers and others in the school—other teachers, resource personnel, and support staff. She serves as a liaison, a gate, a doorway to the new world of the new teachers. As important as this is to be done at the very start of the school year, it is also important that this mentoring continue throughout the year since there are always new forms to be filled in (report cards, for example), new deadlines to be met, new expectations to be learned (what type of festivity is **really** allowed at Christmas?, what are the local customs for celebrations?), and sometimes new students to be met.

For classroom visitation, observation, and what would be called “formative” supervision, the Lasallian formator or mentor needs first of all to engage the new teachers in such a way that classroom visits are seen as helpful and welcomed, rather than disruptive and anxiety-producing. The mentor needs to make it clear that she is not the evaluator

of the new teachers and is not the spy of the administration that is keeping tabs on new teachers. Frequent informal visits often help to establish a climate where both new teachers and students are comfortable in having the mentor present in the classroom. Each visit should be followed by a spoken word or written word about what was seen in the classroom, highlighting the positives and emphasizing what the mentor found exciting, encouraging, new herself, and noting areas that need further attention. The more formal visits could be used to focus on those strengths and weaknesses, as well as to observe other elements of instruction. In all this the mentor is to be charitable and kind, honest in encouragement and in calling to task, helpful in providing suggestions to correct difficulties. The mentor works with and not on the new teachers. Thus, she should not give too much advice at one time but measure it out so that it can be followed. In the classroom she is to avoid at all costs anything that would undermine the authority of the teacher, unless of course the health and safety of the students were in jeopardy.

What should be looked for during classroom observation? The three areas proposed in *The Conduct* (1887) and listed above are as good a starting place as any: 1) how the new teachers comport themselves in class and relate to the students; 2) how the instructional process is used by the new teachers; and 3) how the new teachers manage the classroom, particularly in terms of positive and negative reinforcement.

Following an observation it is necessary that the mentor, as immediately as possible, provide feedback for the new teachers as part of the overall on-going dialogue about professional growth. Thus, the mentor's task is to weave in what she has seen in the classroom, what she has heard the new teachers speak about either formally or informally before or after prior visits or over a cup of coffee in the teachers' room, what she has seen in the hallway and in the cafeteria, what the new teachers have been reading about or studying as part of their professional growth experience. The individual classroom visit is, at best, a snapshot or a series of snapshots at a given time with a given group. It is not a reflection of the new teachers' growth or lack of growth in and of itself. It is part of the movie that the new teachers are creating and that the mentor is helping them to make sense of and find meaning in.



Finally and above all, the mentor must know the new teachers as well as she encourages them to know their students. She must take the time to discover whether or not they are self-willed or timid, inconsistent or rigid, and to develop strategies for dealing productively and in a non-defensive manner with each. She must find ways to open the frustrated teacher to some of the little signs of humanity, like a student's smile or kind word. She must work diligently with the new teacher who is experiencing few successes to find the ways to build upon small successes and to not hold himself or herself up to some ideal image of "successful" teacher. In addition, she must do everything possible to assist the new teacher who is on the verge of giving up, using all of her own creativity and resources for that purpose.

The Lasallian formator and mentor today sees in the new teachers flashes of excellence and promises of great effectiveness; it is her task to help the new teachers see that in themselves and in their teaching and to use that as a motivation for growth.

Maxims or Axioms with which the Formator is to Fill the Minds of the Young Teachers

De La Salle often encouraged and enjoined upon the earliest Brothers to be attentive to the maxims of the Gospel, those short and succinct statements of principle that help one to capture truth and a code of conduct in a few words. The *Conduite des Formateurs* (1811) offered 10 maxims that were to be passed onto the new teachers.

- 1. Pray, and call on God for his assistance.** The new teachers were to remember that their success depended less on the efforts and talents of men than on God's blessing and gift. The Scripture text: "Unless the Lord build the house, those who would build it labor in vain" was to be an underpinning of their conviction that the ministry of teaching is the Lord's ministry and those who "represent" Jesus to the students must be filled with his Holy Spirit. This first maxim, like the first task of the formator to bring the new teachers to a deeper understanding and love for teaching, recognized that the *Meditations of John Baptist de La Salle*, especially those for the time of retreat, were a fundamental formative tool (Poutet, 1997, p. 100).

2. **Be faithful to the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*.** Fidelity to the *Conduct* was to ensure that the students would receive a fine, proven education. Such uniformity between the classes of different teachers and between different schools was necessary since the teachers were frequently redeployed from class to class and school to school. Unless there was uniformity the students would be adversely affected. In addition, such uniformity would lead to teachers being less tired, students progressing more easily and quickly, common principles being more impressed on the students' minds, and parents who themselves were familiar with the system of learning being able to assist their children.
3. **Establish and maintain good order.** Good order is needed for instruction, and disorder in small things grows into disorder in greater things. The new teachers would do well to avoid calling on another to establish order but should do so if needed in extraordinary cases.
4. **Know beforehand what is needed for class.** The new teachers are reminded that before going into class for the first time they should know something about the character of the students and the parents. With that knowledge they should do the necessary preparation and exercise the necessary precautions to lead to success.
5. **Keep composure on the outside.** The new teachers should enter class with a modest exterior—simple, unaffected, happy—that wins the hearts of the students and the esteem of all. With such composure the new teachers need only keep threats and punishments at a minimum.
6. **Study the different “characters” of the class.** The new teachers should not treat all students in the same manner; they are to know the strengths and weaknesses of the students. They should treat some with firmness and some with gentleness (another echo of the *Meditations*); one they might encourage and another discourage. In addition, the new teachers need to adjust their lessons to the range of students in the class.
7. **Be docile.** The new teachers should show a willingness to listen to the advice of the formator and other experienced teachers.

8. **Have an engaging manner.** Students prefer a teacher who gives off good vibrations rather than bad ones (sulking, frowning, or surly).
9. **Be attentive to oneself and to one's appropriate conduct.** Students will notice the teacher and the teacher's behavior. Therefore, the new teachers must be vigilant about themselves. A positive teacher-student relationship, as well as a negative teacher-student relationship, often depends on whether the teacher conducts himself in a poised manner or in an inconsiderate manner.
10. **Study and prepare assiduously.** The new teachers must prepare lessons. They must also prepare through prayer so that they speak from the bounty of their hearts and with the force of their example. What they say and what they do must be consistent and that is the result of reflection and prayer. The new teachers need to enter class with a boldness and confidence that comes from a sense of being in God's presence and realizing that God's providence is all powerful. If the confidence does not arise from the realization that it is God's work, such boldness could very well be seen as pedantry, vanity, and effrontery by the students.

Qualities that Need to be Corrected and Qualities that Need to be Acquired by the New Teachers

In the various editions of the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* (1811, 1887, 1996) the number of qualities in both categories varies; however, there is a consistency to the types of qualities and behaviors judged to be detrimental to good teaching and those judged to be necessary for good teaching. There is logic as well to getting rid of the faults before acquiring the good points (Poutet, 1997, p. 101).

Uprooting the defects found in new teachers

1. **Talking too much.** For new teachers who talked too much (the *Conduct* had clear directions about the use of signs, principally the use of the signal, by which to conduct class in relative silence), the formator was to encourage the new teachers to begin by being si-

lent for a period of time. They were then to gradually build up that amount of time until silence became habitual both for themselves and for the students. The formators were to call to the attention of the new teachers, immediately after class, the times during the class when they talked uselessly. A third suggestion for the formators to give to the new teachers was to find a practice that would remind them to keep silent in class or would help them to avoid the temptation to talk when not needed, e.g., a glance at the crucifix or making a sign of the cross.

2. **Agitation and restlessness.** Two extremes had to be avoided by the new teachers—being either too fidgety or too stiff. In either case it could lead to the new teachers not being sufficiently vigilant and lacking firmness or being robbed of their authority and earning the contempt of the students. The new teachers should remain at their desks for a period of time. They should be aware of unnecessary and distracting mannerisms (hopping from foot to foot, constantly turning their head from side to side). The formator was to remind them through some means to stand still (perhaps by standing near them). He was also to tell them not to use the signal indiscriminately, since there were clear directions for its use at specific times of the day and for specific purposes, e.g., correction of mispronounced words.
3. **Thoughtlessness.** New teachers who were thoughtless should be warned about behaving frivolously, about giggling for no particular reason, and about doing something ridiculous that would cause the students to laugh. The formator must warn these teachers of such behavior and require that they remain seated at all times.
4. **Over eagerness.** New teachers had to be reminded that they should reflect and take time before coming to some snap decision.
5. **and 6. Harshness, severity, and impatience.** New teachers were not to administer correction frequently. Harshness and rigor were not the way to establish order; rather, good order was the result of vigilance combined with circumspection and mildness. The new teachers were to be reminded that they should be calm and unruffled in appearance, indicating a consistent and benevolent disposition. The formator was to make sure that correction was

administered with moderation, never allowing the new teachers to put their hands on their students or to drag them out of their seats or to throw anything at the students. The *Conduct* clearly and strictly delineated the use of the ferule (a leather instrument used to administer corporal punishment through a slap on the hands). For the new teachers the formator further limited its use. The new teachers were instructed to train themselves to never punish any student until they had taken time to reflect and examine themselves and their motives and after having raised their hearts to God. The new teachers were to tell the formator the occasions when they punished without reflection or without an examination of their motives. For the new teachers who became impatient too quickly the formator advised them to sit back and identify the feeling; in addition, such new teachers were warned not to keep within their reach anything with which they might hit the students. Prevention of unnecessary correction and punishment was absolutely essential.

7. **Antipathy for certain students.** New teachers were to show care for all the students, because they were in fact called to love each student. Preferential treatment for some would create in others a feeling of being disliked by the new teachers. For those students to whom the new teachers were not naturally attracted or who were less pleasant, the new teachers were encouraged to show more concern and affection, to be more attentive to in class and during lessons, to give them rewards even if they did not fully deserve them, and to get close to them without emotional involvement even when the new teachers felt like rebuffing them. To assist the new teachers the formator was to role play in order to get the new teachers to overcome their negative feelings toward some types of students.
8. **and 11. Torpor and the tendency to discouragement.** To avoid discouragement among the new teachers the formator was to point out only one or two defects at a time. The formator was to treat new teachers who tended to get discouraged with gentleness and without putting too much pressure on them.
9. **and 10. Sluggishness and slackness.** New teachers who were sluggish had to be carefully supervised so that they began school

exercises on time, started class on time, kept the students fully engaged in their lessons (never with nothing to do), and saw to it that the students were doing their reading or writing correctly. The formator was to observe that the new teachers were never idle.

- 12. Familiarity.** Too much familiarity could lead to an erosion of the authority of the new teachers and to disorder in the classroom. Therefore, there were to be no signs of favoritism and no toleration of the faults of students because of familiarity with the students. Students were to be required to speak to the teacher only with permission and in a respectful and reserved manner. Teachers were to speak to students only when necessary and with the same respect and reserve. The formator was to be very attentive to this. "Familiarity breeds contempt. Once a teacher is not respected by the students, whatever the teacher may say or do fails to impress them. All teaching and instruction then have little weight and produce no good effects. The students become insolent, and end up making a joke of the teacher" (*Conduct*, 1996, p. 260). However, such a concern for familiarity did not exclude a relaxed and friendly exchange between teacher and students since such an exchange could still be done with respect and could enhance the esteem felt by the students for their teachers knowing that they speak a language that the students can understand.
- 13. Sentimentality and particular friendships.** In order to avoid special favorites and dangerous affection for students the new teachers had to learn the fine line between concern and over-concern. Spoiling some students while neglecting others could never be tolerated. New teachers could have more affection for some (students who are poor) and have a liking for those students who have good qualities; however, they were not to show signs of external affection to any when with the entire group. To have a particular concern for the poorest and those who possess no external advantages (the physically unattractive or the slower student) was a way to overcome their natural inclination to shun these students, rather than to satisfy or content themselves by being attracted to those who were easily loved. Secrets were not to be shared with

certain students. Students were not to be spoken to in private. The attractive students were not to be seated near the teacher. Punishments and correction were to be doled out fairly regardless of the new teachers' like or dislike for the particular student. The formator was to remind the new teachers that familiarity would only lead to serious problems—the favored students taking advantage of the preference, becoming insolent, losing respect, and no longer paying attention; the others growing jealous and developing feelings of hatred both for the teacher and for the favored student(s).

- 14. Inconstancy.** The new teachers needed to be reminded that they should try to keep their disposition the same from day to day and not vary so much that the students became confused, seeing the teachers neglect something that on another day was required. Such behavior could lead the students to murmuring and scorn, especially if correction was given in an inconsistent fashion. Constancy from the very beginning could help the students to themselves get into the habit of acting in a regulated and uniform way. Thus, it was the role of the formator to make sure that rules and practices would be replaced only by those that would be better.
- 15. Lack of concentration or over-concentration.** The new teachers were to be vigilant in the classroom. As such they were to be neither so fidgety nor so recollected that they failed to watch over the students. To address the first, the new teachers were to keep their eyes on their own class and not on other things happening. To address the second, the new teachers were to watch each student **and** the entire class so to see what each was doing. The new teachers were to not focus on one student but rather look around the class. They were to not become so fixated on the place in their own text (rather mark the spot with their finger) that they did not look up to supervise the students. The formator was to encourage this vigilance by having the new teachers read over the contents of the lessons a few times before class so that they would be quite familiar with it, thereby allowing them to not follow so closely but rather watch how the students were following the lesson.

Qualities which new teachers must acquire

The habits that the new teachers needed to acquire were:

1. decisiveness;
2. authority and firmness;
3. reserve (i.e., serious, thoughtful, and modest behavior);
4. vigilance;
5. attention to oneself;
6. professionalism;
7. prudence;
8. winning manners;
9. zeal; and,
10. facility in speaking and expressing oneself clearly and with order and in a way that the children one teaches can grasp (*Conduct*, 1996, pp. 263-264).

These good qualities are, of course, related in the converse to those that were to be rooted out; thus, the *Conduct* does not treat these in the detail of the latter. In addition, the subsequent treatise on the *Twelve Virtues of the Good Teacher* would provide a more expansive definition of some of these habits/virtues.

“YOU WILL HAVE TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT TO GOD...WHETHER YOU HAVE NOT NEGLECTED SOME STUDENTS BECAUSE THEY WERE THE SLOWEST, PERHAPS ALSO THE POOREST; AND WHETHER YOU DID NOT SHOW FAVORITISM TOWARD OTHERS BECAUSE THEY WERE RICH, OR PLEASANT, OR NATURALLY POSSESSING MORE LOVABLE QUALITIES THAN THE OTHERS.”—MEDITATION 206.1

However, decisiveness, authority, and firmness were highlighted. The new teachers were to enter the classroom as self-assuredly as possible, as though having taught for a long time, and without showing any timidity. They were to establish their authority immediately: not allowing the students to address them in class, not repeating directions, punishing severely but fairly, not tolerating the

least problem. Corporal punishment was to be avoided the first week. However, reprimands, if called for, were to be given beginning with the most troublesome students and those older or bigger students whose

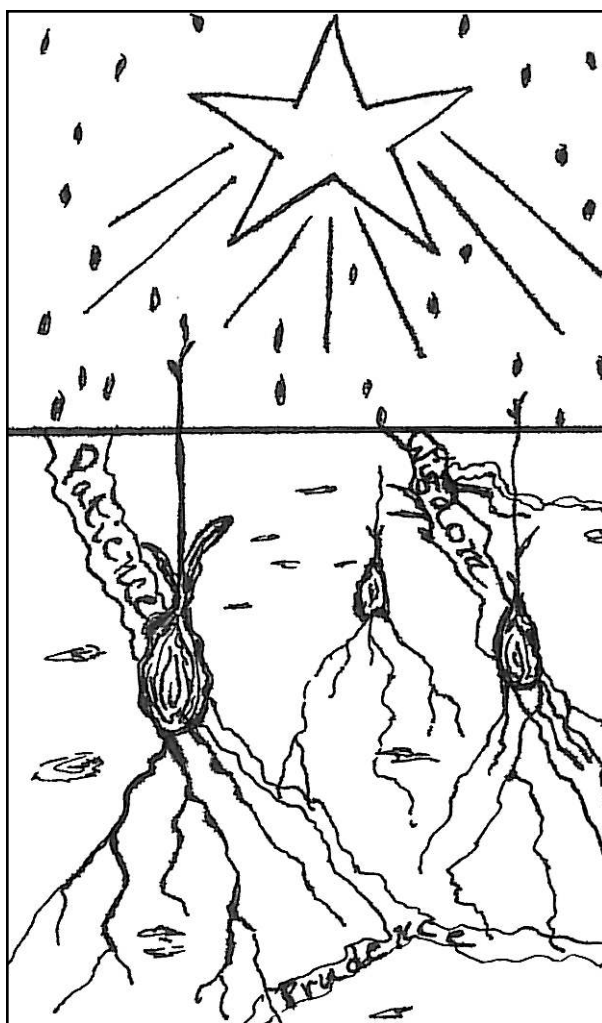
punishment might inspire fear in the other students. The teachers were to show no partiality and were to insist with poise, assurance, and firmness that their orders be carried out. They were to avoid frivolity and speaking with mumbling expression or in a confused manner. Firmness meant that the students were expected to do what the teacher wanted immediately; if not, a correction was to be given. The new teachers were to never give in to the students. Rewards were to be used for those students who behaved well. Regardless of correction or reward, the students were to leave school satisfied since their teachers had treated them fairly, consistently, and firmly. A key for the new teachers to establish themselves was to carefully and constantly study the spirit, customs, and inclinations of the students so to find the way of dealing with them that was likely to be acceptable.

The Lasallian formator and mentor, in dealing with new teachers today, wants to assist them to develop qualities that will make them good and effective Lasallian teachers and to address habits or attitudes that reduce their effectiveness. The maxims can take on new value and meaning today, as can the qualities that needed to be uprooted and those that needed to be developed. This set of teaching qualities, habits, and behaviors, suggested in the various editions of the *Conduct*, might be grouped into five areas:

1. qualities that impact motivation, meaning, and purpose;
2. qualities that impact teacher-student relationships;
3. qualities that impact good instruction and methodology;
4. qualities that impact classroom management; and,
5. qualities that impact rewards and correction to address extraordinary student behavior.

Qualities that impact motivation, meaning, and purpose

The new teachers must root their ministry in prayer and have the conviction that their efforts ultimately depend on the providence of God. Even the best prepared teacher can have a bad day! What will carry them through the bad days is the belief that the work they do is God's work. It is at this moment that the roles of mentor and accompanier



fold into one—walking with the new teachers as a professional guide and as a personal companion. In addition, new teachers need the quality of transparency, i.e., what they say and what they do is reflective of their deeply held values. Thus, students will be able to “see through” their teachers to the integrity of person. Such integrity and transparen-

cy is the fruit of reflection and prayer, an opening of their own minds and hearts. Finally, new teachers can approach the classroom with a boldness and confidence that grows from an awareness of being in God’s presence. It is the boldness of the Old Testament prophet or

“YOU HAVE RECEIVED THE GRACE TO SUPPORT THE WEAK, TO TEACH THE IGNORANT, TO CORRECT THE WAYWARD.”—MEDITATION 37.1

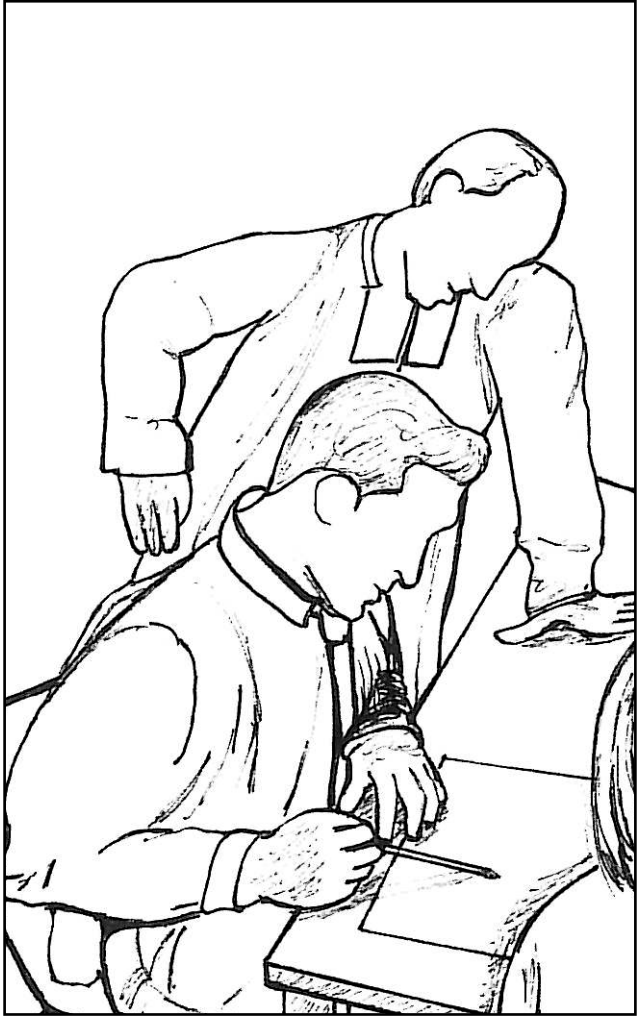
the post-Resurrection disciple who has experienced the powerful presence of God who has called them to do some work on His behalf. New teachers, like new prophets and disciples newly gifted by the Spirit, realize that the words they speak are God’s words and that they are his ambassadors and his ministers. Such self-confidence and boldness, however, is not seen by the students as pedantry or vanity or effrontery because the new teachers act in this way out of faith and not egoism.

Thus, a spirit of faith, a prayerful and reflective stance, and an awareness of God’s presence are qualities that can help the new teachers find meaning in their work and make sense of their calling. As mentor and accompanier, the formator has a critical role in the cultivation of these qualities—through her own transparency and her own willingness to act with a confidence built on faith and on an awareness of God’s presence in the relationship of formator and new teacher.

Qualities that impact teacher-student relationships

New teachers must be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, their own idiosyncrasies, and their own character traits; likewise they must become aware of those of their students. This knowledge, combined with the love that they have for young people in general and the students in front of them in particular, creates the foundation of sound teacher-student relationships.

New teachers need to honestly assess the strengths and weaknesses they bring to the classroom. They need to look at themselves as their stu-



dents will look at them (the input of the formator or even the viewing of a videotaped teaching session can yield much information—sometimes painful). They need to know the limits of their patience, the extent to which they can tolerate a lack of order and control, and the behaviors that severely annoy them (anger, silence, coldness, etc.), among other of their character traits. They need to recognize the degree to which they can think on their feet or to which they can hold back an emotional outburst in order to reflect with a degree of detachment. Once they have self-knowledge (and this growing self-knowledge never comes to a conclusion), then they can begin to address some areas of personal strength or weakness, some annoying or distracting behaviors (excessive chattering when nervous, giggling when embarrassed, movement that has nothing to do with the lesson—pacing, for example).

“DO YOU HAVE THE SENTIMENTS OF CHARITY AND TENDERNESS TOWARD THE POOR CHILDREN WHOM YOU HAVE TO EDUCATE? DO YOU TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR AFFECTION FOR YOU TO LEAD THEM TO GOD?”—*MEDITATION 101.3*

The new teachers must likewise come to know their students. At the personal level, knowledge of students creates one of the conditions by which their hearts can be won over. One cannot love what one does not know! Knowing the students well (being aware that one student has been out sick for a while, that another

played on a team that was victorious the previous evening, or that another always has difficulty in doing group work) can create a healthy climate in the classroom. It can make the classroom a hospitable place: a place of safety, a place where one feels he or she belongs, a place where self-esteem is affirmed, a place where exploration and growing and making mistakes can happen. Knowing the students can help the new teachers to prepare lessons that are engaging (based on student interests) and appropriate to the ability of the students (neither too easy nor too difficult, but challenging enough to stretch their skills and their prior learning). In addition, knowing the students can help the new teachers to determine appropriate rewards and forms of correction that will motivate either a continuation of appropriate behavior or a change in inappropriate behavior.

The teacher-student relationship is one in which, through healthy interactions, students can learn and can grow to be good persons. Thus, the new teachers should be unaffected and happy in appearance (not

putting students on the defensive by being sulking or frowning or surly), composed and engaging so that the relationship is not predicated on threats or promises, poised and considerate in dealing with others. Preferential treatment for some students or favoritism can result only in a painful experience for the teacher and student(s) alike. A climate of antipathy for some students and favoritism for others can lead to an erosion of healthy teacher-student relationships, as well as an erosion of teacher authority. This is not to deny that natural attractions between teacher and student(s) do occur. However, showing signs of special care for a student or group of students can lead to a fractured classroom in which the firmness and impartiality of the teacher is open to question, in which jealousy and vying for favors can breed animosity between teacher and students and among students themselves. It can also lead to questions of impropriety and crossing appropriate boundaries (either of age or of role). This does not mean that the new teachers should avoid assisting those who need additional help or avoid comforting a student who suffers a loss or avoid congratulating a student who does something well. It does mean that new teachers should avoid a pattern of care or antipathy that is unrelated to the circumstances of the students. At the same time, new teachers should not be so paralyzed by fears of familiarity that they do not engage students in a relaxed conversation and friendly exchange. There is a difference between the teacher's speaking a language that the students can understand and one that reduces the teacher to being on the level of a peer. Communication between teacher and student should have boundaries, now complicated by the accessibility of e-mail and instant messaging. Even how one names the other needs to be appropriate within the context of the institution. The bottom line is that new teachers, even though they might be only a few years older than their students, have a role that places certain expectations upon them. Young people, for the most part, want their teachers to be adult friends, wisdom-givers, and guides; they do not want chums or buddies who, despite their age, try to act young!

For the formator this is often an area that can be fraught with dangers. He must, first of all, be honest with the new teachers as they learn about themselves in the classroom setting, pointing out things like issues of personal hygiene or habits that had developed over a long time (speech patterns or hand movements). He must help the new teachers

to make appropriate use of knowledge of students (so that knowledge about a student does not subtly prejudice the new teachers' view of that student to see only the good or only the bad or does not give the new teachers a reason to give up on or ignore that student). He must monitor the relationships between new teachers and students. He must point out the thin line, the boundary that marks propriety and impropriety. Finally, he must confront when that line is crossed, both for the sake of the student(s) and the new teachers.

Qualities that impact good instruction and methodology

Besides knowledge of the subject matter and the ability to convey that subject matter in an intelligible and understandable fashion, the new teachers need to be well-prepared. Preparation involves both the construction of lessons integrating old and new knowledge and skills and the adjustment and adaptation of that material to the students being taught. A well-prepared lesson gives forethought to all the tools needed for the lesson; a well-prepared lesson has those tools ready and available (everything from the availability of chalk or a marker to the Internet connection). Preparation does not ensure that the lesson will be successful; however, lack of preparation is a sure formula for disaster.

Although strict adherence to a single method is no longer something to be demanded, the new teachers would do well to establish some uniform patterns, especially for the start and end of class—activities that pull students into the lesson and that provide a summary or conclusion to the lesson. The development of consistent rubrics would help the students to have a clear picture of teacher expectations. A system for how to approach the reading of poetry or how to complete an experiment in chemistry becomes part of the scaffolding on which new approaches can be developed. Variety must be purposeful—different strategies must be consistent with the subject matter, the objective of the lesson, and the students in the classroom.

New teachers also need to learn how to use time efficiently in the classroom and to promote optimal student time on task. Vigilance, concentration, and organization are the qualities that new teachers need to have or to develop in order to keep students productively engaged in the lesson.

Although the role of silence and the use of signs and the signal do not have the same significant role in instruction, it is a topic that is worth looking into. The new teachers would do well to cultivate a sense of silence in themselves, in their students, and in the classroom environment as well. Learning should not equate with teacher talk; nor should learning be equated with student talk or activity. Learning needs quiet and silence, and quiet and silence are not traits of the modern world. New teachers might want to consider strategies that promote reflection or the formulation of questions or visualization or use of imagination—all of which require some silence. New teachers might want to create spaces and times in which they and the students can be at prayer or can gather their thoughts or can draw deep from the voices within—the voices of prior experiences or the voices of feelings that are evoked by a particular reading or film. The interior world needs exploration in school as much as does the exterior world.

The formator needs to be an advocate for preparation, perhaps even assisting in the crafting of lessons when the new teachers lack that skill or, by temperament, like to be more free-floating (not always appropriate when a group is waiting for the floating to end!). She needs to point out when variety is needed (especially for the new teachers who are more timid by temperament and resistant to change) and when consistency ought to be a goal (especially for the new teachers who revel in change, personally bored by routine). She helps the new teachers see how time is being used; in observation she might keep a record of student time on task, providing a second set of eyes for the new teachers. Finally, she encourages the new teachers to be silent and to use silence in teaching. For hyperactive, garrulous new teachers the formator might point out instances where quiet might have enhanced the lesson or, in another lesson, the formator herself from the back of the classroom might signal the new teachers to provide more quiet wait time after asking questions.

Qualities that impact classroom management

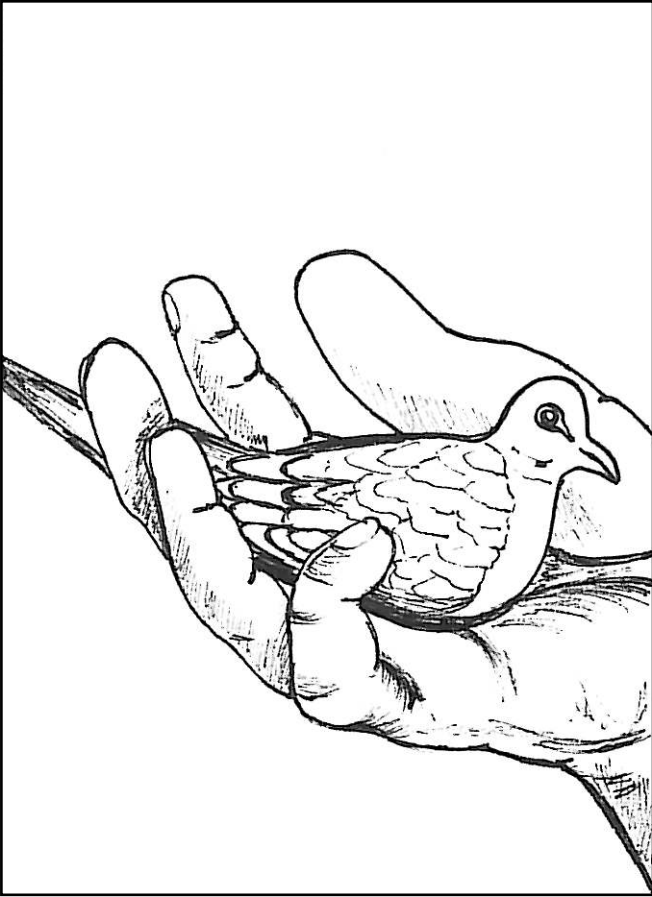
Many of the qualities for effective teaching are directly related to effective classroom management. However, it is important that these are always viewed in the context of good teaching, i.e. motivation for

teaching, teacher-student relationship, and good instruction. Far too frequently good classroom management is equated with good teaching. Classroom management is only one of the conditions for good teaching; however, it is an important condition. Good order is necessary, not for the sake of order, but rather for the sake of instruction and learning to occur. Disorder in small things, like a spark in a dry forest, can lead to disorder in greater things.

Consistency. Consistency is a necessary quality for new teachers. This would entail that the new teachers develop consistent procedures (for the simple housekeeping tasks of the classroom, like collecting and distributing papers, as well as for more substantial issues, like a procedure for dealing with work when absent from class) and to make sure that their classroom rules and procedures are consistent with those used in the school. Such an approach would help the new teachers to be less tired (reduce the need to answer the same procedural question over and over) and would allow students to experience consistency both in the classroom and from classroom to classroom. Students have the uncanny ability to see inconsistencies and to use those to dislodge a lesson, to pit teacher against teacher, or to find reasons not to do something and plead ignorance.

Silence. Silence is a quality that can also be used as effectively in classroom management as in instruction. The use of signals (the flicking of an overhead light switch, a raised hand) becomes a necessary tool during large group and small group activity when the attention of the students is being sought. It is far more effective than the new teachers' shouting over the students. The pointing to a rule posted on the wall of the classroom can be a quick reminder of a behavior that is not being followed or a gentle tap on the shoulder can remind a student to be attentive. In each case, the new teachers can maintain the flow of the lesson and at the same time call attention to a problem.

Vigilance. Among the most important of the qualities to be developed by new teachers is vigilance. Vigilance is the ability to see the single student and, at the same time, the entire class, to follow the activity of the class while following the text or the movie, and to observe the class while writing on the board or working with a single student at his or



her seat. Vigilance is the gift of a sixth sense—to have eyes in the back of one’s head. It is a gift that can be cultivated. The new teachers must practice concentration, i.e., to focus completely on the task at hand. They must also practice detachment, i.e., to separate oneself from the task at hand in order to see the bigger picture. This requires that the teacher be attentive but not fixated.

Alertness. The new teachers also have to practice alertness. This more active form of vigilance would lead the new teachers to begin activities on time, fully engaging the students as a group, so as not to have students give their attention one by one or over a period of time during which the first student who had become attentive loses attentiveness. Appropriate movement around the class, positioning oneself strategically, and otherwise being actively involved in the process even when the activity is student-directed (student seat work, small group work) are examples of alertness. At no time in the classroom can the new teachers become disengaged. Even when they are not in the forefront of instruction they are the managers of the instructional event.

“IF YOU HAVE FOR THEM THE FIRMNESS OF A FATHER TO RESTRAIN AND WITHDRAW THEM FROM MISBEHAVIOR, YOU MUST ALSO HAVE FOR THEM THE TENDERNESS OF A MOTHER TO DRAW THEM TO YOU, AND TO DO FOR THEM ALL THE GOOD THAT DEPENDS ON YOU.”—*MEDITATION 101.3*

Being respected, decisiveness, firmness, and gentleness. In order to establish authority in the classroom the new teachers need the qualities of being respected, decisiveness, firmness, and gentleness. Being respected is the result of treating others with respect;

fairness and impartiality help one to gain respect. Decisiveness shows itself in acting consistently, not tolerating any problem that disrupts the learning process. It is the ability to come to a quick but reasoned judgment and action—to know when a situation needs to be addressed in class or outside of class or to call attention to someone in a light-hearted way or with serious demeanor. The new teachers need to demonstrate firmness in making demands on the students that are reasonable, on establishing consequences for noncompliance, and on following through with those consequences. At the same time gentleness is needed so to be able to take into account human nature and the differences among students. This quality of dealing with students

in an equitable fashion, though not necessarily in an equal fashion, is why new teachers must know the spirits and inclinations of the students. One student may need to move around the classroom, a condition that can be met by the teacher by allowing that student to collect papers, distribute books, etc.; another student may need to work with a partner because of a language deficiency; another student may need an extended period for testing or a different space for testing.

The formator of the new teachers needs to be particularly active with the new teachers who are lacking in the qualities that are conducive to classroom management. Disorder can snowball and can create frustration in new teachers that only exacerbates the situation. At all costs the formator has to try to guide the new teachers to establish or reestablish a classroom management system on their own—a system that works both for themselves and for the students. The imposition of a system from outside will not make the new teachers' lives any easier. Frequent classroom visitations, clear suggestions, role playing to develop skills and to become more comfortable—these are some of the strategies the formator can try. Unfortunately, new teachers often have to learn from their mistakes in classroom management. The formator's role then is to make sure that those difficult lessons are learned by reflecting upon the problems with the new teachers and dialoguing with them about how change will come. Oftentimes the formator has to show the firmness of a father and the gentleness of a mother when dealing with the new teachers in this area—being both clear about the reality and understanding about the impact it is having on the new teachers; demanding results, while at the same time recognizing that those results will be different depending on the strengths and weaknesses of the new teachers.

Qualities that impact rewards and correction as ways to address extraordinary student behavior

Rewards and correction are extensions of classroom management. They are tools of the teacher to affirm behavior consistent with the expectations set for the class and to call attention to behavior that is inconsistent and at odds with the expectations that had been set. As set forth in the *Conduct*, all misbehavior should be dealt with through a series of corrections. The very term, correction, indicates that the end result of

the action taken by the teacher is to be a corresponding action by the student—a recognition of the problem and a change of behavior (or skill, if the problem were a learning problem such as a mispronounced word or an ill-formed letter). Some correction could be in the form of a penance; others in the form of a punishment. However, the end point of each was a conversion, a change of heart or practice or behavior.

With this in mind, the new teachers need to know their students well so to determine an appropriate strategy for rewarding or correcting. They must know what motivates, what brings about the desired results; they must also know what makes the situation worse, what has little effect. Rewarding a student who has written a fine essay by saying that he or she need not write the next essay can deliver a mixed message. Correcting a student who has difficulty with and an aversion to composing an essay by having him or her write a long essay on the infraction can be counterproductive.

Especially with corrections, new teachers need to avoid an over eagerness and intemperance in assigning correction. Each correction demands reflection, an assurance that it is being done for the welfare of the students and not to assuage the teachers or to resolve their feelings. It might even warrant prayer (raising one's heart to God to ask for wisdom and to check on one's motive).

Vigilance, consistency, and a friendly disposition are more effective than allowing things to get out of control and then trying to pull in the reins, acting in rashness, and showing a harsh, non-compromising disposition. If the end point of correction is to encourage self-correction, the “honey” approach rather than the “vinegar” approach seems to make more sense.

Fairness (equity and not equality) is an essential quality needed by the new teachers. They should not be reluctant to correct students whom they like and to whom they are attracted. They should not be afraid to correct the student “bully.”

They should be poised and not overwhelmed by their own emotions when correcting. They should be clear and the message should be clearly delivered—not mumbled, not giving cross signals (such as a smile or a smirk).

Finally, it should go without saying that they should not touch students in anger or push or manhandle them. There is no place for physical/corporal punishment.

For the formator, the matter of reward and particularly correction is an important issue to raise with the new teachers before they are put in the situation where they are faced with determining a reward or a correction. In the first place, the formator needs to clarify the nature of reward and correction, for too often schools become fixated on forms of external motivation rather than internal motivation. It is internal motivation, perhaps prompted at the beginning with a reward or correction, that leads to some action taken by the students themselves. As formator, he too must model for the new teachers that any reward and any correction offered to them is done so that they make changes freely, because they see something that needs to be done. In the second place, he needs to work with the new teachers on the qualities that promote preventive discipline in the classroom and with the students—the same qualities that need to be called for when the time for correction arises, i.e. vigilance, consistency, fairness, clarity, impartiality. In the third place, he needs to help the new teachers develop an ability to detach themselves, to reflect, to take hold of their feelings. This does not mean that the teacher stifles or buries the feelings (only to emerge at another even less appropriate time), but rather says to himself or herself, “I am angry” or “I am frustrated,” and then, “What do I do with that anger or frustration?” At this point, the raising of one’s heart to God for guidance is not a bad idea, for it is a reminder that it is God’s work that the teacher is doing. In some cases, role playing of situations, before they arise or even after they have occurred, can help the new teachers discover alternatives.

Conclusion

There is still a need for formators for new Lasallian teachers—formators, who can serve as guides, mentors, companions, and companions on the journey to become a competent professional and a minister of grace. To be a formator requires certain qualities and to perform the tasks and duties requires certain competencies. Not surprisingly, these qualities and competencies are not all that different than those called for from the new teachers themselves.

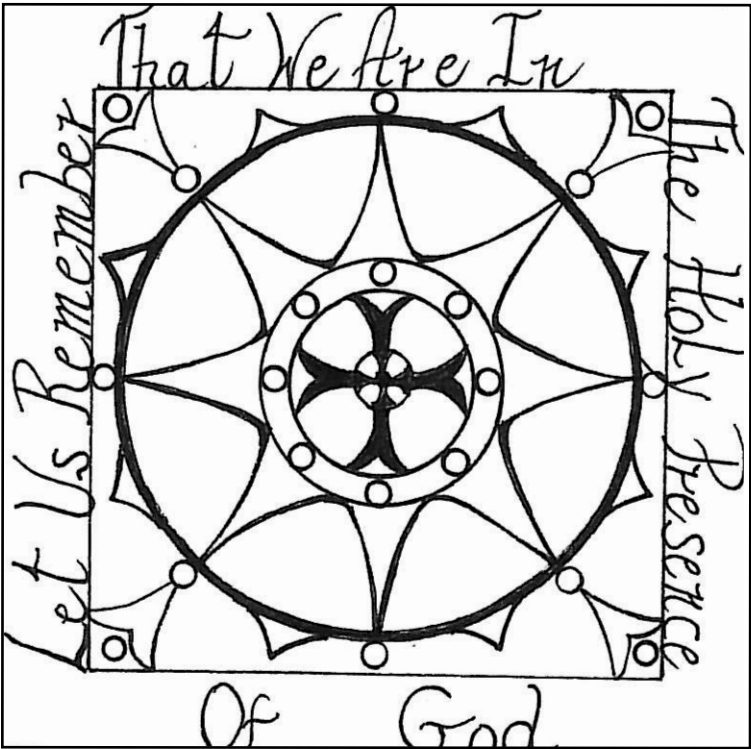
The new teachers need to draw on the experiences and wisdom of their formators. They need to see in them how firmness and gentleness make sense together, how a spirit of faith is related to a spirit of zeal, how recognition that the work is a calling and a ministry does make a difference in how one deals with persons and tasks, how vigilance is possible, how silence and reflection can be sources of insight. Thus, the formator needs to model what she says. She must be transparent.

The formator must give himself completely to his task, must give all the affection of his heart to the new teachers, and put at their disposal all of his experiences and gifts. In classroom visits he is to be attentive; in discussions he is to be prudent. He is to be creative in his responses to situations that present themselves. He is to be kind and affirming and, at the same time, honest and challenging. He himself must be both a student of effective pedagogy and instruction and a student of human nature; in both cases, he must be willing to continually learn both about ways to teach and those who are doing the teaching. He must learn to speak the language of the new teachers and to relate with them. At the same time, he must retain his ability to speak the language of experience, the language of the tried and true, of the proven.

The formator must walk with the new teachers through their successes and failures. She must affirm the best of their qualities and help them to root out those qualities which make them a less effective teacher. She must hold a mirror before them. She must help them to rearrange the pieces of the puzzle when the puzzle fails to be completed.

Above all, the formator is called upon to help the new teachers grow in their love—their love for teaching, their love for their subject matter, their love for their students. He is called upon to accompany them in their own journey to find out the ultimate meaning of their teaching. Hopefully, in that accompaniment, both the formator and the new teacher will discover that they have been called to a sacred trust, a privileged vocation, a holy ministry—that of touching the minds and hearts of young people, of helping them to hear the “good news” about their own lives, of leading them to the possibility of a life lived to the full, of bringing them to the realization that they are indeed saved and loved.

It is their birthright as a Lasallian, formator and new teacher alike, to be called to be brother and sister to each other and to those entrusted to their care. It is a birthright that they hold in trust for generations of new Lasallian teachers yet to come.



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